

HANDBOOK FOR RECORDING INSCRIPTIONS IN CEMETERIES



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NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY, INC.

NLGS was founded in 1984 and incorporated in 1987 as a not-for-profit corporation. Membership is available to individuals or groups for \$20 annually. Benefits of membership include receiving *The Newfoundland Ancestor*, our quarterly journal. We hold regular meetings in St. John's and have a branch in Gander. Members can advertise their research interests in our journal, or use our archive and library.

In 1985 NLGS began to collect transcriptions from headstones under the direction of four Cemetery Cataloguing Committee. Currently the collection has transcriptions from over four hundred cemeteries. Volunteers send us their work and we have organized some group projects. Headstones provide information which may not be accessible anywhere else. They sometimes give the place of birth which may be the town or county of origin of a settler. Headstones are prone to destruction, through weather, time or even by man. By recording inscriptions, we are preserving the information for the future.

NLGS received approval to hire several students in ten communities in the province in 1991 - Burgeo, Burin, Fogo, Gander, Grand Bank, Holyrood, St Anthony, Stephenville, Torbay and Twillingate. In 1990 we had four Challenge Grants - in Ferryland, Gander, St Anthony and in Twillingate.

Each grant is a co-operative effort with a local heritage society or museum group. Our branch in Gander manages the Challenge Grant in that area. This handbook is sent out with a kit containing supplies for the students. Any questions which arise can be answered by the local groups, or by NLGS. Our experience has shown that the students enjoy their work and develop an interest in their heritage. NLGS is proud to have the opportunity to work with young people in these co-operative ventures.

Acknowledgements:

Many thanks to the following people for their help in putting this handbook together: Edward-Vincent Chafe CG(C), Georgina Howell, Jeannie Howse, Deanne Peters, Robert Pitt, , Terrence M. Punch CG(C), Kevin Reddigan, Steve Sharpe.

INTRODUCTION

DEFINITIONS

Cemetery: A place set apart for burying the dead. The word, which derives from the Greek word for sleeping chamber, became popular in the nineteenth century.

Churchyard: Enclosed ground in which church stands (or stood), sometimes used for burial.

Graveyard: An early cemetery. This term is used to differentiate historic burial grounds of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries from modern cemeteries.

Graveyard Preservation: To protect, maintain, and save. *Preservation* has a broad meaning that includes both conservation and restoration. In the context of *graveyard preservation* the term includes the care of graveyards, gravestones and documents.

Graveyard Restoration: To reconstruct, repair, renew, using techniques of preservation and conservation.

Marker: An object used to mark the site of a grave. This term includes footstones, headstones, and monuments constructed from any material, whether inscribed or not. This term is been used extensively in this handbook as a general term.

Footstone: A small stone marker placed in the burial plot opposite the tombstone.

Gravestone: Inscribed stone at head or foot of grave.

Headstone: The chief stone placed in the burial plot.

Tombstone: Monumental stone placed over grave.

Plot: An area of ground belonging to a family; may be fenced, or have a border; may have more than one marker and more than one family name inscribed.

Transcribe: To copy out in writing.

How To Use This Handbook.

This handbook is designed to help students and volunteers who have never worked transcribing inscriptions before. Each section of this book will focus on a different aspect of the job. We suggest that you take the time to read through the entire book before you begin work.

This book will give you all the information you need to complete your work of transcribing inscriptions. You will find out what equipment is needed, how to draw scale maps using two different methods and how to work safely and accurately in cemeteries.

A kit containing supplies will be sent out for each group working with our Challenge projects. **Marker Record Forms**, are provided for each headstone. Because many of the cemeteries have not been studied before we have included a **Cemetery Survey Form** to be completed for each

cemetery. It is very important that your work is accurate. Each stone you transcribe is fragile. A stone that looks strong and in good repair one day, can be destroyed the next.

Who Will Use The Information In The Archive?

The Newfoundland and Labrador Genealogical Society archive is available to anyone who is looking for information. Genealogists research their Newfoundland origins and trace the British, French or Irish origins of their ancestors. Headstones often predate any other written evidence of our ancestors. The stones themselves have a story to tell. Prior to about 1830 headstones were imported; most came from England and Ireland but some came from Massachusetts and Nova Scotia. A headstone was a luxury item and often many names were inscribed on one stone. Those families who lacked the financial resources to purchase a headstone used field stone or wood. Wooden markers generally lasted only a few years and it is well known that they were used as firewood during severe winters.

Why Are People Interested In Headstone Inscriptions?

There are many reasons to be interested in headstones. Each stone has an intrinsic value as a work of art, as a specimen of archaeological interest. Family members of the deceased are interested in preserving the grave in memory of their loved ones. Family plots are often carefully maintained over many generations by the family. Genealogists are interested in the information contained in the inscription. A student of sociology may wish to study headstone transcriptions to learn about the deceased person, his family and his community. A student of psychology may be interested in the attention paid by our ancestors to burial rites.

What Will Happen To The Information You Record?

The **Marker Record Forms** will be placed at the office of the genealogical society where it can be used by researchers. In the future the collection will also be made accessible through a computer data base.

Who Will You Meet When You Are Transcribing Headstone Inscriptions?

Members of the public, clergy, members of Church Boards and Town Councils will all be interested in your transcribing project. Please show them this handbook and give them a copy of our brochure *Newfoundland and Labrador Genealogical Society Inc., Invites You to Discover Your Roots*.

Many people in your community will be interested in this project. We would like you to ensure that you can put any concerns people may have at rest. For example:

- 1 White chalk numbers on headstones will not harm the stones in any way and the chalk will wash off after several rainfalls.
- 2 Headstones will not be harmed. We ask our workers not to move or re-position stones, to work safely and carefully.
- 3 The information gathered through these projects is available for anyone. Interested individuals or groups should contact NLGS.

PREPARATION

Equipment needed:

- Clipboard
- 6' tape measure
- White chalk
- Individual Marker Record Form
- Pens or pencils (two colours)
[blue for transcribing, red for checking]
- Spray bottle to squirt water on faint inscriptions
- Hand mirror to help read faint inscriptions
- Plastic tube [3 or 4" diameter] to angle sunlight
at difficult inscriptions
- Flashlight
- Clippers
- Hooked stick to pull branches away
- Garbage bags
- First aid equipment for minor cuts, insect bites etc
- Sun hat
- Fly screen or fishing hat
- Gardening gloves
- Rubber boots for wet ground

Safety First

Do not work alone.

Dress for the weather - it is usually colder than you expect.

Cemeteries often have brambles, insects and rough ground.

Check the area carefully for any hazards. Mark hazards with surveyor's tape.

Be on guard for headstones which may topple and do **not** attempt to erect toppled headstones.

List Local Cemeteries

Make a list of the cemeteries in your area, estimate how many headstones you think there are approximately in each cemetery. Chose one of the smaller cemeteries to begin.

What Mapping System Will You Use?

This is your first decision. Once you know what method will best suit your cemetery, you should complete the map before you transcribe any inscriptions. Once you have some experience, you can decide which one of your group is best at mapping and let the others work on transcribing while the map work is being done.

It is important to leave the cemetery at least as tidy as you found it. It is a good idea to bring a garbage bag with you and pick up litter as you work. Few parishes have a budget for maintenance or clean-up work in cemeteries so your efforts will be noticed and appreciated.

MAPPING

Equipment needed:

100' tape measure
Mapping paper (graph or surveyor's paper)
compass
pencil
string
surveyor's tape (luminous)
Topographical maps of the region
Community maps

General Instructions

First use topographical maps of your area and draw on the location of each cemetery. These maps will help you with the scales you need for your own maps. Your sketch map of each individual cemetery will make it possible for people to find any plot they are looking for. Each cemetery should be mapped using one of the two methods described in this section **Sketch Map** and **Grid Map**. Smaller cemeteries can be easily mapped using a sketch map. The grid method works well for larger cemeteries. You can divide the cemetery, using string or rope, or pathways into grids, then you can draw a separate map for each grid section. Take a good look at each cemetery first to decide which method is most suitable.

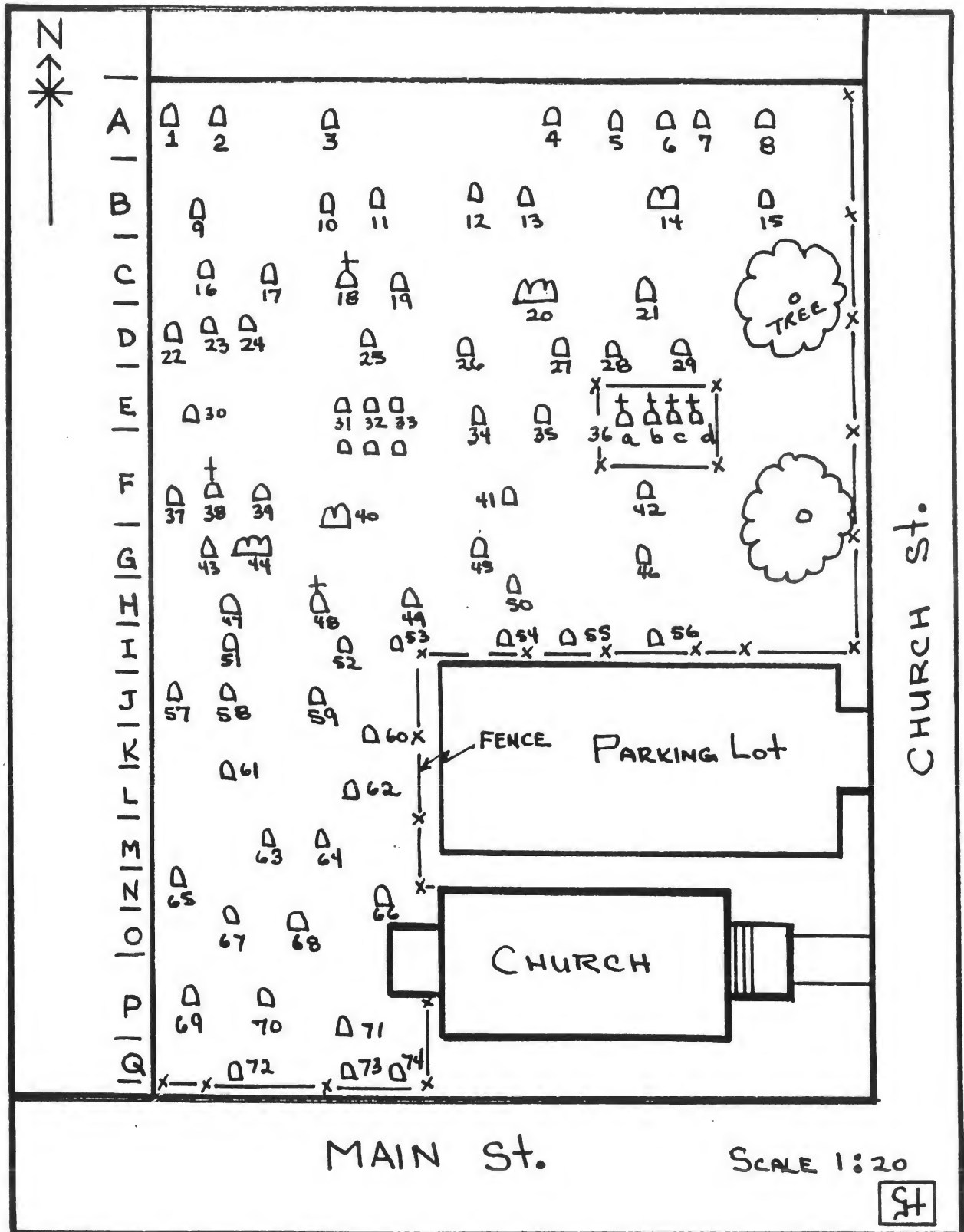
- 1 Decide if you will work in metres or feet, find a reasonable scale ratio for your map. We suggest you use metric and work in a scale of 1:20 - 1cm on paper = 20cm in the cemetery.
- 2 Indicate North on your map, if possible North should be at the top of the map.
- 3 The map of the cemetery should show the location of each plot and each headstone.
- 4 Include empty/unmarked plots on your map. Draw in significant landmarks or buildings.
- 5 Show the numbers of the plots on your map. Be consistent by always numbering from top left corner working down to the left (West). Mark the numbers on the headstone (with white chalk) and on the map and a **Marker Record Form** at the same time. **The same number is not repeated in a cemetery.**
- 6 You are marking plots. When there are several headstones in one plot give all of them the same number. Then add small letters of the alphabet after each one. For example: Marker number 34a, 34b, 34c, 34d - these are all in the same plot.
- 7 Write the numbers on the headstone near to top, being careful not to write in any art work. Chalk will wash away after several rainy days.
- 9 Check with the church office/parish office for a map of the cemetery. If one is available arrange to photocopy it in sections.

METHOD 1 - Sketch Map

This method works well for small cemeteries or for larger ones which are well laid out.

- 1 Measure the boundaries of the cemetery. Draw them on your map, to scale.
- 2 Draw each plot and indicate the plot number on the map.
- 3 If the plots are arranged in rows, use capital letters of the alphabet to number the rows on your map, and on the **Marker Record Form**.
- 4 Draw a rough sketch at the cemetery and later on, draw a good version indoors.

Sketch Map

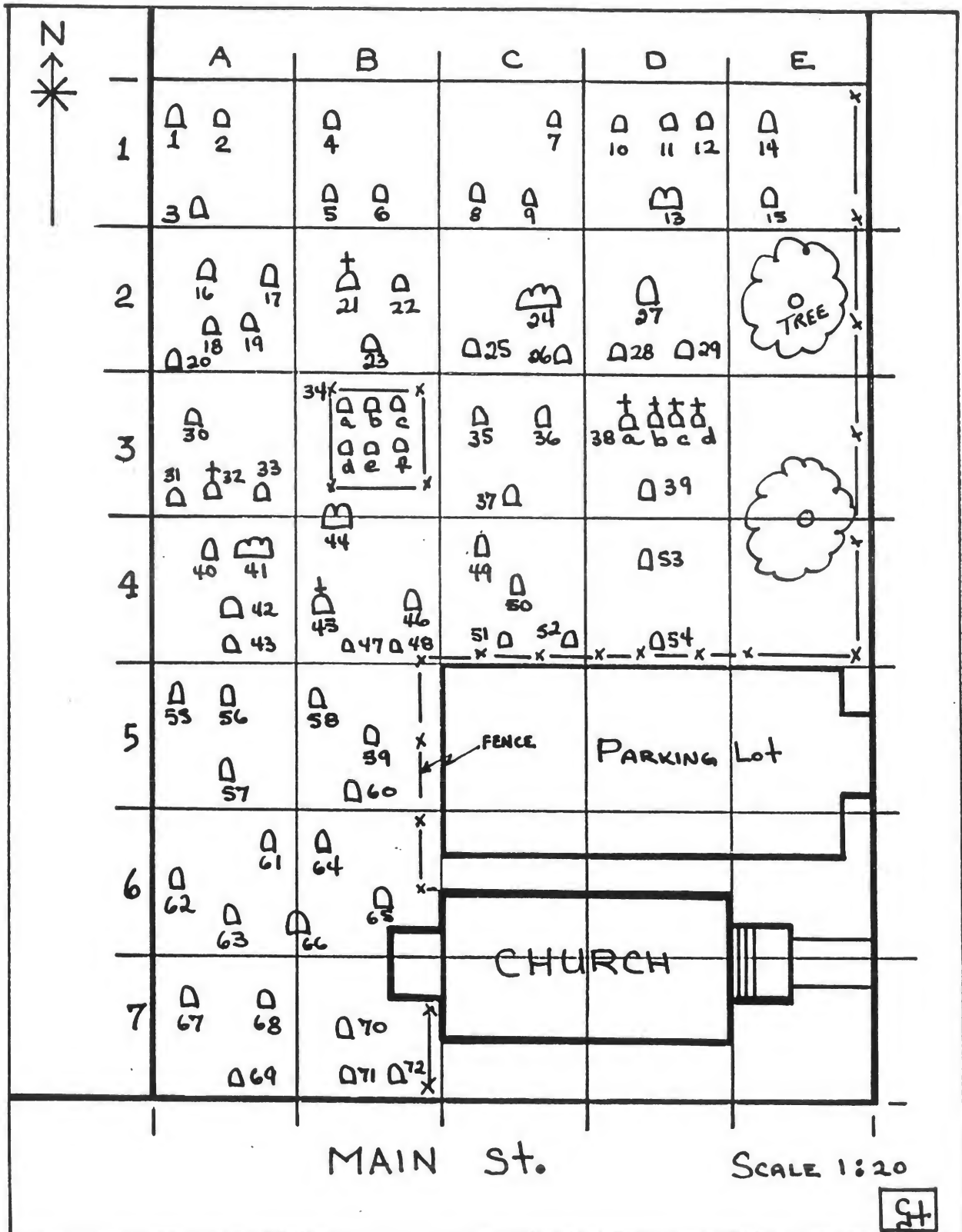


METHOD 2- Grid Map

This method is suitable for large cemeteries with irregular placement of headstones.

- 1 Begin dividing the cemetery into sections (grids) using string or rope, or pathways. Do not mark the whole cemetery off, try marking two or three sections at a time. Do not mark off more than you can complete in a couple of days.
- 2 Draw the grids on your map to scale. We suggest a scale of 1:20. Use numbers and capital letters to number each grid block beginning from the top left corner (West) to top right corner (East). Use capital letters at the top of the map to mark grid blocks, and numbers on the left side from top (North) to bottom (South).
- 3 Indicate each plot number on the map. When you have finished numbering plots in one grid, continue with sequential numbers in the next grid. Do not repeat numbers within a cemetery.
- 4 Your grid pattern will probably cross over rows. Plot 34 is in grid B3 while plot 35 is in grid C3.
- 5 Use natural boundaries rather than your string to divide a large cemetery into sections. Pathways and fences will be easier to find after a couple of days.
6. Clearly mark your string with surveyor's tape so that it is clearly visible.

Grid Map



TRANSCRIBING

Equipment needed:

Refer to Section on Preparation

Forms:

Cemetery Survey Form
Marker Record Form

This is the most major part of your work and is best done in pairs. If there are four people, the first pair can be responsible for preparing the cemetery and the second pair can then begin to work copying inscriptions. When the cemetery is completed the first pair can check that the work is recorded accurately.

- 1 Read the full inscription.
- 2 Fill out the Individual **Marker Record Form** as provided in this handbook. Remember to use the blue pen. Look at the completed sample form to guide you.
- 3 For any words which are faint, use the spray water bottle. As the water dries on the surface more quickly than in the grooves, you may find it possible to decipher difficult lettering. Do **not** use grass, weeds or any other substances which may damage the stone.
- 4 The angle of the sun makes a difference to the legibility of faint inscriptions. Try looking through plastic tubing or using a hand mirror.
- 5 Do not attempt to clean the stone as restoration work requires specialized training and equipment.
- 6 **Print** all words exactly as you see them on the headstone. Do not shorten any words - names, dates, places. Please use neat clear printing. **Do not write.**
- 7 Once you have transcribed an inscription, use chalk to cross out the chalk number, before you move on to the next headstone.
- 8 Lots of people will be interested in your work. If they offer any additional information, record it on the back of the **Marker Record Form** of the subject headstone. Name the person who supplied the information.
- 9 Once all the headstones in a cemetery are recorded checking must be done, using a **red** pen. Corrections on the **Marker Record Forms** must be made with a **red** pen. Do not check your own work.

Helpful Hints

- 1 Interpretation is a matter of opinion in cases where inscriptions are faint. Use a question mark (?) on the form to show doubt.
- 2 When you cannot read a part of an inscription indicate in brackets using dots the number of letters which are unreadable, e.g. [.....].
- 3 When a headstone is broken through the inscription, please indicate where the break occurs in your transcription.
- 4 Make yourself comfortable when you work.
- 5 At no time place yourselves in danger, remember that headstones weigh several hundred pounds. Do not attempt to move them. A flash light and mirror can help you to read the inscription from the side if the stone is placed too near the ground.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The purpose of this small handbook is to give very basic information for students and volunteers in the task of transcribing monumental inscriptions. For those readers who are interested in learning more about the subject, this bibliography offers further reading.

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Memorial Symbolism, Epitaphs and Design Types, Publisher, American Monument Association, Inc.

FORMS COMPLETION

CEMETERY SURVEY FORM

Complete a **Cemetery Survey Form** for each cemetery. This is a two part form. It is likely that each cemetery has probably never been surveyed before and the information you record will be valued by the church the community. Some of the sections of this form can be filled in while the cemetery is being mapped. Other sections can only be completed once the **Marker Record Forms** have been finished.

The history of the cemetery is likely to be known in the community. Record any information which residents tell you. Do not undertake to interview people. If you know that the parish registers are held in the church vestry please note this information on the form. Use a separate sheet of paper if necessary and title it with the name of the cemetery.

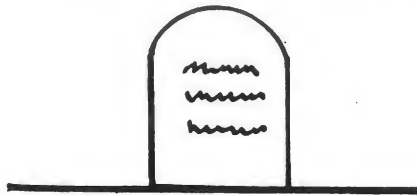
MARKER RECORD FORM

For each plot and/or each headstone complete one **Marker Record Form**. These forms are designed to make your job easy. Please take care to record the correct answers in each section by writing in the appropriate number.

Marker Number This is the number assigned to this plot/headstone by the mapper.

Marker Type

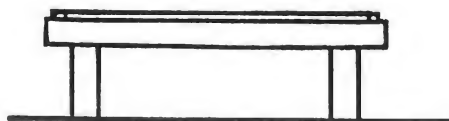
- 1 *Headstone* - most common type with no base visible



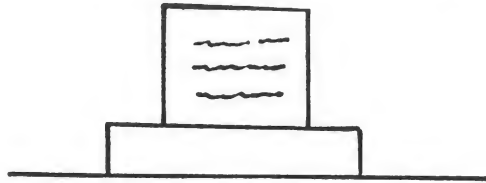
- 2 *Foot marker* - fairly rare and these are small usually inscribed with the initials of the deceased. Because they are small they tend to move from their original location.



- 3 *Table* - a high raised slab, may have more than one type of stone/brick construction.



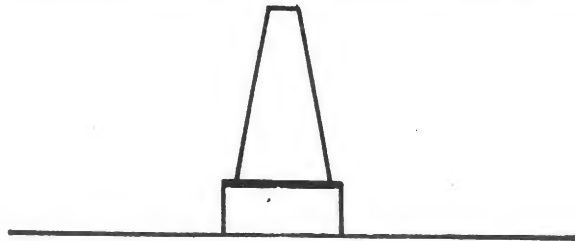
- 4 *Headstone mounted on a base* - this is a very common type. The marker tends to separate from the base and you could record any repairs at the base.



- 5 *Box* - a single low slab, usually large and placed directly on a foundation and is inscribed on the flat or angled top surface.



- 6 *Monument* - a tall round or square pillars and may have a sculpture on the top.



- 7 *War grave* - Veteran' Affairs provide headstones to servicemen. They are easily distinguished by their uniform size, shape, stone type and inscription. They have very simple inscriptions, giving the name of the person, his service number, the year of his birth and death and the name of the war in which he served.
- 8 All markers can be found singly or in a *family plot*. A family plot will contain more than one marker. Please record how many markers there are in a family plot.
- 9 *Other* - this will include brass plaques you find inside churches, if you have access to them. There may be other types of marker not included in the 8 above. Please specify the type of marker.

Material type It is difficult to identify the various rock types. Your description in the next section will help confirm your guess. During certain times, marble was particularly popular, and slate is quite unusual.

- 1 *Slate* - a dark rock, often used for roofing. It splits easily and its grain is easily seen.
- 2 *Marble* - in the 1800's it was popular to use imported Italian marble. It is usually white. It loses its shiny finish in a few years. Marble has a very fine grain and if you touch it a fine coating of dust may stay on your hand.
- 3 *Fieldstone* - any stone found in the local area can be used as a marker. This was very common in Newfoundland because of the expense of purchasing headstones. A

fieldstone may have an inscription carved or painted on. Unfortunately it is difficult to decide if a stone has been used to mark a grave. If you have any doubt, record it on a form anyway.

- 4 **Granite** - a coarse to medium grained stone, it sometimes appears as a composite type rock, with traces of quartz making it seem shiny. It is hard and weather resistant and is grey, black or red. It polishes to a very shiny finish.
- 5 **Wood** - many people used wood markers, in a slab or as a cross. They can last for many years but are much more vulnerable than stone. Sometimes they are used as temporary markers in modern cemeteries. Record your opinion on the back of the form
- 6 **Brass plaque** - these tended to be used inside churches as memorials. Modern markers are often marble with brass plaques attached.
- 7 **Other** - record on the back of the form.

Description of Material Type write a short description of the material, such as "Highly polished black stone" or "white stone with dull finish, streaks of pink and grey".

Plot Boundary describe the edging of the plot, not the headstone.

Condition of marker note that some stones will have more than one condition type. please record all conditions of each marker.

Marker Dimensions measure the marker.

Marker Facing record which way the headstone faces
North South East West Northeast Southeast Northwest Southwest

Decorative Motif some markers will have more than one type of decorative motif. Please record them all. If the motif is 13 (other) please specify. Draw the motif on the back of the form. There are hundreds of symbols used by societies, organizations, Armed Forces and other groups. When you sketch these symbols include details.

Condition of Inscription record the condition of the lettering.

List Surnames on Marker write down each surname mentioned on the marker.

Number of People Commemorated record the number of people the stone commemorates.

Inscription print the full inscription exactly as it is on the headstone.
Use a slash (/) to indicate where each line ends. Please indicate any questionable transcriptions.
If the headstone is cracked, make note on the form of where the crack occurs.

On the Back of each **Marker Record Form** draw the shape of each headstone. Sketch any symbols. Any additional information you wish to record may be printed on the back of each form.

NLGS wishes each student an enjoyable summer. Please pass along any suggestions to us for use in future years. We look forward to hearing from you.



NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY INC.

CEMETERY SURVEY FORM

NAME OF CEMETERY _____ MASTER NUMBER _____

CITY, TOWN OR COMMUNITY (specific location) _____

RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION _____ DATE OF SURVEY _____

THIS CEMETERY IS MARKED ON _____ MAP(S) _____

STATUS OF CEMETERY	DISTANCE FROM NEAREST WATER	AGE OF MARKERS	RESTORATIONS
<input type="checkbox"/> Abandoned <input type="checkbox"/> Maintained but not used <input type="checkbox"/> Currently being used	Metres _____	_____ Earliest date _____ Most recent date	<i>Give numbers</i> _____ Metal supports _____ Set in concrete _____ Painted to protect _____ Capped with metal _____ Repaired with mortar _____ Other _____
CLASSIFICATION	NEAREST WATER IS	DATES OF MARKERS	MARKERS ARE MADE OF
<input type="checkbox"/> Church <input type="checkbox"/> Family <input type="checkbox"/> Municipal <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> River <input type="checkbox"/> Pond <input type="checkbox"/> Ocean	<i>Approximate number of each</i> 1700s _____ 1800s _____ 1900s _____	<i>Give approximate number</i> _____ Marble _____ Granite _____ Fieldstone _____ Slate _____ Wood _____ Other (specify) _____
ACCESS TO THE CEMETERY	SIZE OF CEMETERY	CONDITION OF THE MARKERS	DAMAGE
<input type="checkbox"/> By foot <input type="checkbox"/> By car	<i>Measurement of Boundaries</i> _____ M x _____ M	<i>Overall Evaluation</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <i>Specific Problems</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Badly tilted stones (how many) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Fragments on ground <input type="checkbox"/> Many markers broken but standing <input type="checkbox"/> Damaged surfaces – <input type="checkbox"/> Flaking <input type="checkbox"/> Moss/Lichen <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<i>How many markers have been damaged by</i> _____ Vandalism _____ Erosion _____ Moss/lichen _____ Other (specify) _____
DIRECTION MOST STONES FACE	NUMBER OF HEADSTONES		
<input type="checkbox"/> North <input type="checkbox"/> South <input type="checkbox"/> East <input type="checkbox"/> West	_____		
TERRAIN	CONDITION OF THE GROUNDS		
<input type="checkbox"/> Level <input type="checkbox"/> Hilly (moderate) <input type="checkbox"/> Hilly (steep) <input type="checkbox"/> Marshy	<i>Overall Evaluation</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Well maintained and preserved <input type="checkbox"/> Poorly maintained <input type="checkbox"/> Overgrown, markers visible <input type="checkbox"/> Overgrown, markers hidden <i>Specific Problems</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Overgrown vines/brambles <input type="checkbox"/> Overgrown grass <input type="checkbox"/> Overgrown shrubs/trees <input type="checkbox"/> Fences/walls in poor repair <input type="checkbox"/> Others _____		
BOUNDARY			
<input type="checkbox"/> Fence <input type="checkbox"/> Hedge <input type="checkbox"/> Wall <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____			

HISTORY OF CEMETERY

Include dates of parish registers and the names and addresses of your informants (if known).

MARKER RECORD FORM

DATE _____

CEMETERY _____ RELIGION _____ GRID NUMBER _____

MARKER NUMBER _____ NAME OF RECORDER _____

MARKER TYPE	CONDITION OF MARKER	DIMENSIONS	DECORATIVE MOTIF
1 Head	1 Sound	Height (cm) _____	1 Angel
2 Foot	2 Chipped	Width (cm) _____	2 Lamb
3 Table (High)	3 Cracked	Thickness (cm) _____	3 Skull
4 Head on Base	4 Crumbled	DIRECTION MARKER FACES	4 Urn
5 Box (Low)	5 Eroded	N NE	5 Flowers
6 Monument (Column/Spire)	6 Broken	S SE	6 Face(s)
7 War Grave	7 Tilted	E NW	7 Hands
8 Family Plot	8 Sunken	W SW	8 Rosettes
9 Other	9 Stained	CONDITION OF INSCRIPTION	9 Heart
	10 Moss/lichen covered	1 Mint	10 Other Symbols (<i>sketch on back of form</i>)
	11 Overgrown	2 Clear but Worn	
	12 Repaired	3 Mostly Decipherable	
	13 Displaced	4 Traces Only	
	14 Toppled	5 Illegible or Destroyed	
	<i>Comments:</i>		

MATERIAL TYPE	TYPE OF PLOT BOUNDARY	NAME OF CARVER	LIST SURNAMES ON MARKER
1 Slate	1 None		_____
2 Marble	2 Wood Fence		_____
3 Fieldstone	3 Iron Fence		_____
4 Granite	4 Concrete		_____
5 Wood	5 Other _____		_____
6 Brass Plaque			_____
7 Other:			_____
_____			_____

MATERIAL DESCRIPTION		NO. OF CARVED SURFACES	No. of People Commemorated
(Include colour, grain, polish)			

[illegible]

MARKER RECORD FORM

DATE July 5/90

CEMETERY St Peters

RELIGION Anglican

GRID NUMBER

MARKER NUMBER I 86

NAME OF RECORDER Pam Anstey

[illegible]

INSCRIPTION

Sacred / to / the memory of /
Amos Blackler / who died / May 8th 1901 /
Aged 72 / we know that All things
work together for / Good to them that
love God, to them who are / called
according to his Purpose Rom viii 28 /
until Christ who is our life shall
appear.

